

Scottish Borders Council
Main Issues Report Public Consultation 2018-2019



Prepared by:

J D W Murray PG Dip SURV FAAV
Murray Land & Buildings
Hillside
Dean Place
Newstead
Melrose
TD6 9RL

Following the Scottish Borders Council public consultation on the Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan 2, I am writing to object that the land outlined in red above and below, is not currently being considered for adoption. On behalf of my client [REDACTED] I would like to propose the land outlined in red above and below for adoption.



OS 100059842 showing part of Melrose and Darnick

The proposed site is a 4.5 acre field located to the south and west of Melrose’s existing development boundary. Access to the field is taken from High Cross Avenue. The field is laid to grass with tree belts on the north and south boundary and a small yard and stabling area on the north west boundary. The site has been used to graze horses for 30 years +.

The site would be suited to development for 20-25 houses.

Assessing the land for adoption into the local plan using SBC protocol the following has been summarised –

Initial Assessment

- There appears to be no inherent flood risk shown to this site on the SEPA flood maps.
- A sensibly designed scheme to deal with surface water run-off would negate any of the potential flooding impacts which new build housing could have on the surrounding area.
- Following consultation with Scottish Water a foul connection to the main sewer is possible and there is sufficient capacity.
- Following consultation with Scottish Water there is sufficient capacity to supply the proposed site with a new water connection.
- The site is not located in or adjacent to an SAC, SPA, SSSI or RAMSAR. The site is within the NSA.

Background Information

- The agricultural classification of the land is Grade 3.1. Formerly only Grade 1 & 2 land was deemed to be Prime Quality Agricultural Land but this term now encompasses Grade 3.1.

- The land is Greenfield, adjacent to housing on its eastern and northern boundaries and not suited for arable agricultural production due to its location and scale.
- There does not appear to be any planning history specific to the field itself, though a corner was sold away in the 1970s for the development of a single house accessed from Ormiston Terrace

Accessibility & Sustainability Assessment

- Access to public transport, employment and services are all good.
- There are no obvious ground breeding protected mammal habitats within the site.
- The stables could be surveyed for Bat activity but given the natural habitat in the vicinity and building type I do not believe there to be any.

Local

- The north east corner of the site is adjacent to a single dwelling within the Melrose Conservation area.
- There are no listed buildings on or immediately adjacent to the site.
- There are no scheduled monuments, Ancient Woodland or Garden and Designed Landscapes.
- Part of the site comes within the Battle of Darnick site.
- The site is within the National Scenic Area.

Planning and Infrastructure Assessment

- There appear to be no existing rights of way over the land.
- The tree belt on the northern boundary is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.
- The land is greenfield and historical mapping does not suggest that there should be a risk of land contamination.
- Scottish Water have confirmed that there is sufficient water & sewerage capacity.

Site Issues

Access & Trees

Access to the site would be at the north west end of the site, where it already exists. An improvement to the access here would require the removal of 6 trees so that a suitable site line could be created for traffic entering and exiting the site onto High Cross Avenue/Abbotsford Road. This would be required to meet with the SBC roads requirements and Scottish Government guidance.

Tree removal would require planning and felling consent. Compensation as per standard Forestry Commission felling licence requirements would require replanting. The rate of replanting for small felling licences can be x3 the number lost. Re-planting would take place along the western boundary to form a robust permanent development boundary for Melrose.



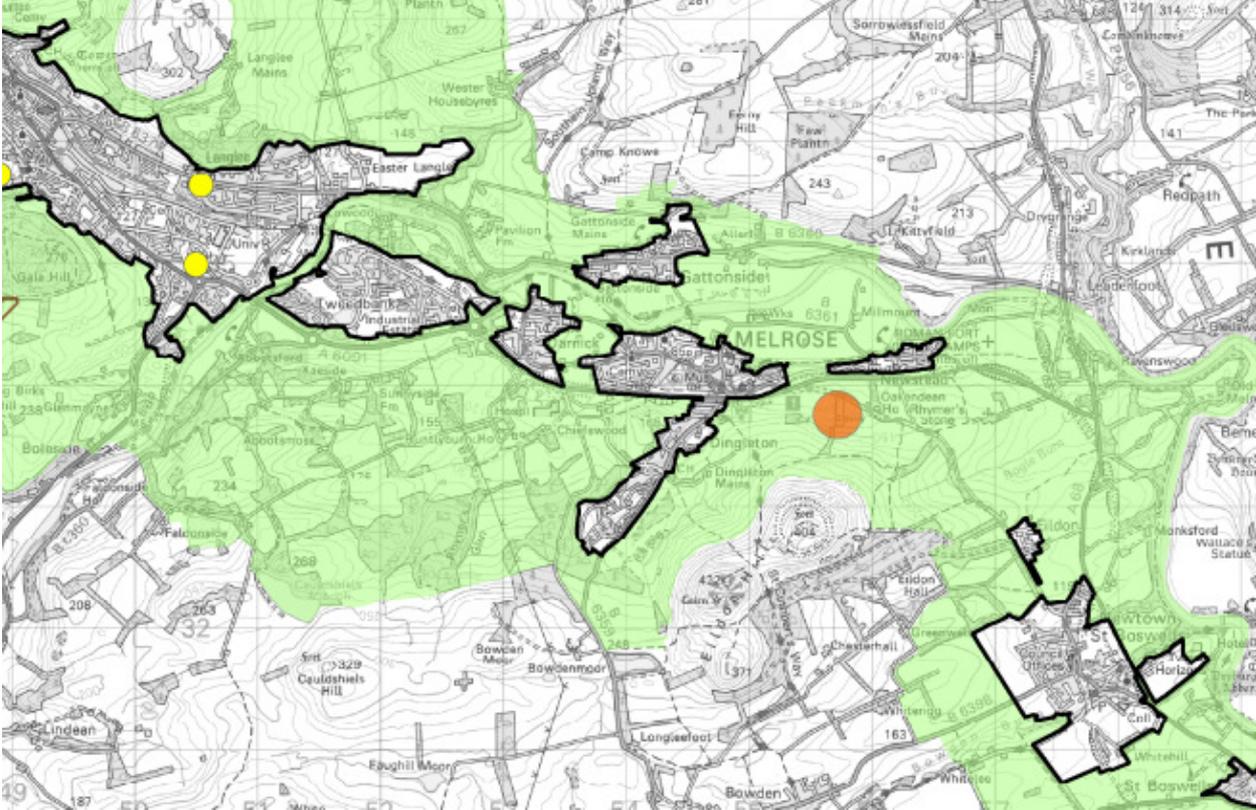
6 Trees within the yellow ellipse would require to be removed to allow sight lines for traffic to be improved.



Close up of 6 trees requiring removal.

Countryside Around Towns

Landscape, Biodiversity, Access & historical features



SBC Countryside around Towns plan from Policy EP6

The current local plan policy EP6 Countryside around Towns seeks to protect the coalescence of towns and villages, especially in the Central Scottish Borders hub. This is important to maintain a village or towns identity. Ironically this is also where the previous ‘Call for Sites’ and by extension the new Local Plan aims to promote development to create a larger population density to support the Central Hub including the rail link and infrastructure. There will always be conflicts with development in these sensitive areas and this proposal is exactly that. However, that does not mean that this site should be dismissed because of the above map. If that were the case then any proposed development within the green shaded areas inside the Central Scottish Borders would cease, which I do not believe is what the National Planning Framework, Structure Plan, Local Plan or indeed Policy EP6 are aiming to achieve.

Realigning the development boundary to include this land would bring more of Darnick and Melrose closer together, but interestingly the development boundaries would be no closer than their nearest points already are. The realigning of the development boundary would also square up a kink in the existing one and put down a final development boundary in place for Melrose on its south western boundary with Darnick. Viewed from areas above and around the locality I do not believe that development on this land leads to the coalescence of Melrose and Darnick.



Site viewed from top of Eildon Hills. Realigned development boundary shown in green meeting with the trees to the north which are in the Melrose development boundary.



Site viewed looking south. Site not visible through trees which are within Melrose development boundary. Realigned development boundary shown in green.

The definition of coalescence is open to some degree of interpretation, though case law would suggest that the development of this site would not meet with the definition owing to the remaining fields and road providing adequate separation between Melrose and Darnick.

The proposed development site is-

- Deliverable within the short term because there is a market for the location.
- Serviceable and able to utilise existing transport networks.
- Straightens a kink in the town boundary.
- Within the Central Hub.
- Provides a more suitable expansion to Melrose than the alternative land proposed for adoption off at Harmony Hall Gardens.
- Of a suitable scale in size.
- Of minimal impact to its surrounds.

I am of the opinion that this site may be deemed as coalescence by the Planning Department, but I would ask that some consideration be taken over the appearance of the proposed land being taken into the Melrose development boundary and the remaining buffer land which forms the countryside around towns between Melrose and Darnick. These are all material points as to whether there is actual coalescence occurring should the land be adopted, and I don't believe that to be the case.